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Google's Self-Driving Car Prototypes Hit Public Roads for the First Time

by DEVIN COLDEWEY

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Google

Google's prototype self-driving cars have made the leap from the test track to public streets, and are now cruising around Mountain View, California, at a stately 25 mph, the company wrote in a blog post Thursday. The pod-like vehicles were revealed in December, the result of intense research and development in labs and on the Lexus SUVs the team used to test and tweak the artificial intelligence platform. The prototypes are road-legal, but required a bit more testing before they could be let loose into traffic — Google announced in May that summer would see the prototypes rolling all over northern California.

Related: Google Exec Wants Self-Driving Cars To Be Standard Within 5 Years

If you're still wary of the autonomous vehicles, don't worry — for now, every prototype will have a human inside to take control in case anything goes awry, and they're all limited to a "neighborhood friendly" 25 mph. But considering the system's track record — 12 accidents over 1.8 million miles, and none the AI's fault — you're probably more likely to get in a fender-bender with someone texting while driving.

The cars will also soon sport the work of local artists during an "Open Garage" event in the fall — you can learn more about the art program and even submit your own work here.



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